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Abdullah-Umno/BM

ABDULLAH SAYS HE IS NOT "HABIBIE"

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 29 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said today there is no question of his having a "Habibie syndrome" as a result of his close relationship with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The deputy prime minister said he supported Dr Mahathir because of his leadership of the country, the Malay race and the Malaysian people.

"We do not blindly follow a leader. There must be a basis and reason. I have also been at odds with him (Dr Mahathir)," he said when asked about talk among Umno members of him having the "Habibie syndrome".

B.J. Habibie, the former Indonesian president, was a protege of his predecessor, Suharto, and had been described as being under Suharto's thumb.

Speaking to reporters after presenting financial aid to orphans in the federal territory, Abdullah said: "If I were to compare myself to habibi...is Dr Mahathir to be likened to Suharto?"

"Dr Mahathir is not Pak Harto. Malaysia is not Indonesia. We succeed on our own capability although we face all kinds of problems and challenges," he said.

Abdullah said he was a deputy and not an alternative leader, and that other than discharging his duties, he need not compete with Dr Mahathir.

He said he was confident that Umno members would not be easily fooled by such talk because they knew what was happenin withing and outside the country.

On the Umno divisions which will be starting their delegates conferences tomorrow, he advised all members to observe the party constitution and rules and not to do anything that could embarrass Umno.

-- BERNAMA